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SECURITY INFORMATION

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

26 September 1952

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 275

SUBJECT: Draft of Board comments for DCI on "War and the Soviet Doctrine"

1. The author of this paper reaches two main conclusions:
(a) that Soviet Russia is "planning a war", and (b) that Soviet Russia, under the Stalinist regime, will probably not deliberately precipitate general war during the next decade if the Western powers preserve a firm policy and adequate defense. The author indicates that an outbreak of major conflict during this period is unlikely.

2. We agree that the Kremlin probably will not deliberately initiate general war in the near future, though we are unable to extend this estimate to cover a decade. We believe, however, that there is a continuing danger of general war resulting from a Kremlin action or series of actions not intended to have that result, or from actions which, in the Kremlin's view, entail the risk but not the certainty of war. We cannot agree that general war is improbable simply because the Kremlin is unlikely deliberately to initiate it.

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3. If "planning a war" means the building up of Soviet economic and military resources to a high degree of war-readiness, then we agree that Soviet Russia is planning a war. We agree also that the Soviets probably expect eventually to become involved in general war against the "capitalist" powers. If, on the other hand, the author means that Soviet Russia is planning for the deliberate initiation of general war at some future time, then we have no evidence either for or against the proposition, and we do not find any such evidence in the paper. Indeed, we doubt if the Kremlin believes that even in a decade or more the productive capacity of the USSR will be equal or superior to that of the Western powers; a requirement which the author finds to be in Soviet war doctrine a pre-requisite to embarking on any major campaign.

4. With respect to the correct tempo of Western rearmament we would observe that the Kremlin has open to it many aggressive courses of action short of a deliberate initiation of general war. We believe that the Kremlin's choices among these courses of action must be influenced by the degree of military readiness, as well as by the economic potential, of the West. Hence the tempo of Western rearmament cannot be made to depend wholly on an estimate of Kremlin intentions respecting general war.

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